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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/FO, SE GRATION, S-USSES, AF/RSA AND IO/UNP  
NSC FOR MGAVIN  
DEPT PLEASE PASS USAID/SUDAN  
LONDON FOR PLORD  
PARIS FOR WBAIN AND RKANEDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: USAU: DARFUR PANEL HANDS OVER REPORT TO AU CHAIR

REF: KHARTOUM 1079

¶1. (U) Summary: The African Union (AU) High-Level Panel on Darfur handed over its report to AU Commission Chairperson Jean Ping on October 8. Ping promptly announced that he would deliver the report to the AU Peace and Security Council (head of state level) at a late October meeting in Abuja to which the U.S. and other international partners will be invited. The Council will decide how the AU will follow up with the Panel's recommendations. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On October 8, the Chairperson of the AU High-Level Panel on Darfur, Thabo Mbeki, handed over the Panel's long-awaited report and recommendations to the AU Commission leadership. In his remarks to AU Permanent Representatives, AU Commission staff, diplomats, and journalists, the former South African President emphasized that the report and its recommendations represented a "consensus view among many in Sudan and internationally, including the millions of Darfurians whose representatives were met" during the months-long investigation by the Panel. Everybody in Darfur and Sudan believes the conflict in Darfur has to be solved by the Sudanese people themselves "and cannot and should not be imposed from outside," Mbeki said.

¶3. (U) Additionally, everybody agreed that peace, justice, and reconciliation must be achieved urgently and simultaneously. "Justice must be done and seen to be done," Mbeki said. Sudanese President Omar el-Bashir agreed that no one was above the law, Mbeki noted. There was further consensus that the conflict in Darfur is political in nature and therefore requires a political solution. A military solution to the conflict is neither possible nor desirable, Mbeki told the audience.

¶4. (U) Any resolution to the Darfur conflict will have to take into account the general elections scheduled for April 2010 and the referendum on secession in 2011, Mbeki continued. Darfurians should be included in those elections. Mbeki went on to cite June 24 remarks by Special Envoy Gration at a U.S. Institute for Peace event in which the Special Envoy spoke of his hope for a peaceful and successful Sudan. Mbeki concluded his remarks by saying that the Panel shares SE Gration's powerful message of hope. "We too are convinced that if the right things are done, Sudan faces a 'future of hope and trust, a future of lasting peace.' "

¶5. (U) After receiving Mbeki's report (what appeared to be a six-inch-tall stack of documents), AU Commission Chairperson Ping underscored the inclusive nature of the Panel's consultations. Ping renewed the AU's call on the UNSC to suspend the ICC investigation against President Bashir, but he said that in no way diminishes the AU's commitment to the fight against impunity. The AU's deployment of forces to Darfur, the sacrifices of those troops, and the unambiguous denunciation of violence in Darfur illustrate the AU's commitment to respecting human rights and protecting Darfurian civilians, Ping added.

¶6. (U) Ping further called on Sudanese parties to redouble their efforts to help solve the Darfur conflict, and urged them to consider the Panel's recommendations with an open mind and a willingness to move forward. Addressing the international community, Ping twice said that they should play a "facilitator" rather than a "complicator" role in addressing the crisis in Sudan.

¶7. (U) AU officials said copies of the report will not be made public until the Peace and Security Council has had an opportunity to deliberate about its contents. The essence of the report has been highlighted in reftel.

¶8. (SBU) Following the report handover ceremony, Mbeki told USAU CDA that the Panel was extremely grateful to SE Gration for his leadership role. He added that the Panel's work is done and the difficult work of ensuring implementation now rests with the various stakeholders in Sudan and their international partners. Sudan's Permanent Representative at

ADDIS ABAB 00002427 002 OF 002

the AU simply commented that the Panel's report and recommendations were a welcome development, and that the Panel's conduct throughout its consultations was above reproach.  
MUSHINGI